



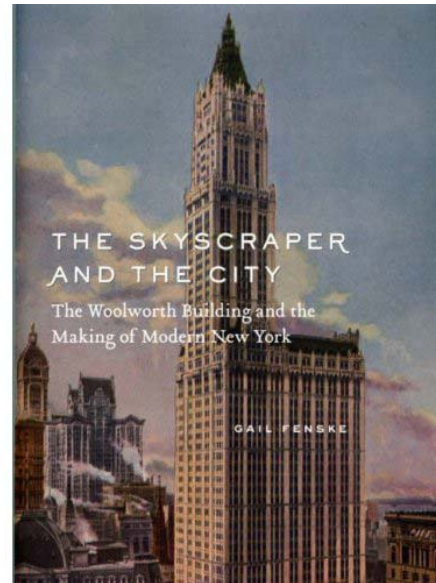
GAIL FENSKE TO SPEAK ON FEBRUARY 17, 2009

Gail Fenske, Ph.D., Professor of Architecture at the School of Art, Architecture and Historic Preservation, Rogers Williams University, will speak to the Cass Gilbert Society on Tuesday, February 17, 2009, at 7 P.M., at the University Club, 420 Summit Avenue, Saint Paul. Her talk focuses on her book, *The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York*, why she wrote it and what it meant to her.

The **Woolworth Building**, once the world's tallest, has captured the public imagination since it opened in 1913. In the first history of this great urban landmark, Dr. Fenske argues that its design serves as a compelling lens through which to view the distinctive urban culture of Progressive-era New York. For Frank Woolworth—the founder of the famous five-and-dime store chain—the building served as a towering trademark; for technological enthusiasts, it represented the boldest of experiments in vertical construction. In her discussion of the Woolworth Building, Dr. Fenske illuminates the process of conceiving, financing, and constructing skyscrapers, as well as the mass phenomena of consumerism, marketing, news media, and urban spectatorship that surround them. At its opening, the Woolworth Building was dubbed the “Cathedral of Commerce,” in part because of its Gothic ornamentation. The Woolworth Building remains a commanding presence in the skyline of lower Manhattan, even more so since the collapse of the World Trade Center towers.

Following her talk, Dr. Fenske will answer questions and sign copies of her book. Refreshments will be served. Admission is free to Cass Gilbert Society members and students with ID; the charge is \$5.00 for non-members.

Gail Fenske is also the author of “The Image of the City: The Woolworth Building and the Creation of the New York Skyline,” a chapter in *Cass Gilbert: Life and Work*, edited by Barbara Christen and Steven Flanders (W. W. Norton, 2001), and “Cass Gilbert’s Skyscrapers in New York: The Twentieth-Century City and the Urban Picturesque,” in *Inventing the Skyline: The Architecture of Cass Gilbert* (Columbia University Press, 2000).



Gilbert scholars Kate Solomonson, Gail Fenske, Mary Beth Betts, Barbara Christen (front); Marjorie Pearson and Andrew Dolkart (rear)
Photo: Courtesy of Marjorie Pearson

MEET THE BOARD OF THE CASS GILBERT SOCIETY AND ANNUAL MEETING NEWS

At its annual meeting on November 11, 2008, the Cass Gilbert Society welcomed several new board members.

Jane Tschida is the new secretary, succeeding Betsy Bradley, who resigned at the end of 2007. Jane was the chief lobbyist and executive director of the Minnesota Trial Lawyers Association for much of her professional life and also served on the City Council of St. Louis Park. When Jane retired in 1999, she became active in the Summit Avenue Residential Preservation Association (SARPA), serving as chair between 2006 and 2008. Jane's mother was an architect so she was very aware of Cass Gilbert and his work. Jane has gained increasing appreciation of the work of Gilbert and other contemporary St. Paul architects during her tenure with SARPA. She looks forward to helping promote the work of one of Minnesota's most famous architects.

Carol Forbes, a native of Minnesota, has lived in several cities around the country and the world and now works for Augsburg College in Minneapolis. She majored in history and has been interested in historic preservation for over 25 years. She credits Linda Bjorklund, a Cass Gilbert Society founding member, with introducing her to the work of Cass Gilbert.

Charlie Neimeyer was raised and currently lives in St. Paul's historic Ramsey Hill neighborhood. Professionally, Charlie specializes in the sale of residential real estate and works out of the Grand Avenue office of Edina Realty. In 2007 and 2008

he received recognition awards from *Mpls.St.Paul* magazine and *Twin Cities Business*. Charlie's interest in architecture was piqued at an early age by many of the homes in Ramsey Hill. Now he considers himself lucky to visit and research buildings around the region under the guise of "work."

Joan Wilkosz has stepped down from the board. Thanks to Joan for her service, particularly with our fundraising efforts. Thanks also to **Lana Mahoney** who has resigned as Program Chair. **Cindy Stephani** will be taking on this job and welcomes ideas for programs.

A particular achievement of the past year has been the introduction of a revised and upgraded Society website, redesigned by Factor of 4, Minneapolis. The address remains www.cassgilbertsociety.org. Several Society members, especially Nick Marcucci, worked very hard to ensure that more substantial factual and visual material is now available on the site.

After the annual meeting, Katherine Solomonson, associate dean of academic affairs, School of Architecture, College of Design, University of Minnesota, presented a lecture; **Cass Gilbert: Reimagining the Western Landscape**, followed by a lively question and answer period. Dr. Solomonson is interested in convening a more informal seminar-type session to discuss questions about and reactions to Cass Gilbert's architecture. We will give you more information as arrangements progress.

2009 MEMBERSHIP LIST

Welcome to new members and thanks to renewing members. This is the list as of January 25, 2009.

Afton Historical Society Press
Barbara Anderson
Clyde and Judy Anderson
Kristin Anderson
Donald Bergmann
Tom Blanck and Linda Bjorklund
Lock and Linda Bounds
Frank R. Braun
Peter and Sandra Butler
Barbara Christen
Sally Seabury Cole
Mary Michael Connolly
Helen Post Curry
Peter Erickson
Lorraine and Tom Evans
Gail Fenske
Steven Flanders
Susan Flynn
Carol Forbes
Ellen and Tom Fridinger

Cathy Gilbert-Rogers
Mark and Marsha Gorman
Thomas Grady
Heidi and Herb Grika
Jim Groskopf
James and Debra Hirsh
Sharon Irish
James Jordan
Allan Klein and Harriet Lansing
Orville Lindquist
Lana Mahoney
Nick Marcucci and Ann Schroder
Sonja Mason
Mary Ann McCoy
Donald Moe
William Towner Morgan
Charlie Neimeyer
Robert and Ann Nye
Julian G. Plante

Vincent Platt and Carolyn
Nayematsu
Chuck Post
Charlotte Prentice
Charlene K. Roise, Hess Roise
and Company
John Schultz and Miriam Rykken
Mary Jo Skaggs
Sheila Smith
Charles Stander
Nancy Stark
Cindy Stephani
Edith Thurber
Michael and Nicola Tietel
Jane and Paul Tschida
Jean Velleu and Jim Law
Wendy Weimer
Joan Wilkosz
Laurel Winsor
Julienne Wyckoff

WHAT IS THE FUTURE FOR CASS GILBERT'S OTTAWA EMBASSY?

In 1999, the United States government left its original embassy building in Ottawa, across Wellington Street from the Canadian House of Commons, for a new building on the outskirts of the city. While owned by the Canadian federal government, its future remains uncertain. Maria Cook of the *Ottawa Citizen* reported on January 13, 2009, that Senator Jerry Grafstein planned to introduce a bill to revive plans to house a permanent Portrait Gallery of Canada in the building.

Built in 1931-1932, the U.S. Embassy is a late design by Cass Gilbert and contemporary with the U.S. Supreme Court in Washington, D.C., and the U.S. Courthouse on Foley Square in Manhattan. According to Gilbert, "Public buildings best serve the public by being beautiful." When it opened in November 1932, the *New York Times* called it "a distinct asset to the already fine array of stately buildings which adorn Wellington Street." The building was the first foreign mission in the Canadian federal capital; the United States was the first country to recognize Canadian foreign policy independent of Britain.

The *Ottawa Citizen* quotes Victoria Angel, manager of the federal Heritage Buildings Review Office: "This building very much speaks to a moment in our evolution as a country, from colony to nation. It occupies a very prominent location in Wellington, which tells us a lot about our relationship with the United States throughout the 20th century. This is a place where history happened. It really is a monumental piece of architecture."

Gordon D. Giffin, U.S. Ambassador to Canada between 1997 and 2001, spoke fondly of the building. He recalled seeing school children leave the House of Commons from the windows of his second-floor office suite, which he called "a window on Canada." He suggested its reuse as a place for the study of Canadian government or history. In 2001, the Liberal Jean Chrétien government announced that a national portrait gallery would be established in the building. Designs for reuse and the construction of an addition were made in 2003, and most of the interior was gutted. When the Conservative government was elected in 2006, plans were halted. Instead, it sought to move the portrait gallery to another Canadian city, but then cancelled that plan last November. Senator Grafstein is promising legislation to revive the Canadian portrait gallery in the former embassy. Ambassador Giffin concluded: "It's a grand old building. I certainly hope that Canadians enjoy it and utilize it in a way that respects its history and architecture so that it will be a vibrant place to remind people of our joint heritage."



United States Embassy, Wellington Street, Ottawa, Canada.

Photo: Isabelle Gournay

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Place
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Here

Our Mission

To preserve our cultural heritage through advancing scholarship in and appreciation of Cass Gilbert's influence on American architecture.

The Cass Gilbert Society, Inc., is a non-profit tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

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Jean Velleu, *President Emerita*
Linda Bjorklund, *Fundraising*
Jim Hirsh, *General Counsel*

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL TIME

It is time to renew your membership in the Cass Gilbert Society or join the Society for the first time. The Cass Gilbert Society maintains its membership records on a calendar year basis (January – December). The membership expiration date is printed above your name on the address label. If you are on our complimentary mailing list, the label reads COMP. Please see the enclosed form for more information about membership and giving levels, or check the Society website, www.cassgilbertsociety.org.

The Cass Gilbert Society is a non-profit tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Membership dues and contributions are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

Do you know that **2009** is the Sesquicentennial of Cass Gilbert's birth? The Cass Gilbert Society is exploring ways to celebrate Gilbert's birthday. **November 24** is the actual day.

February 2009